

Contributions

DENOMINATIONAL RELATIONSHIP

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The question of our logical relation to other denominations often arises in the minds of some of our brethren.

We all believe that most churches refuse to practice a part of the teachings of Christ and that others have added to the requirements of the gospel. While we must not hold a legalistic view of the gospel of grace, i. e., that men are saved by doing whatever is commanded in the scriptures, without reference to the motive with which they do it, yet reverence and love for the Master will not permit us to treat lightly any injunction of Christ.

Some hold that all who do not obey Christ in the keeping of the ordinances which he left, cannot be saved. Others, seeing that other churches have in many ways the spirit of Christ and are doing good, conclude that it makes no difference what one believes, provided he is honest, how he is baptized, provided he believes it, whether he eats the Lord's Supper as Christ instituted it, and whether he practices feet washing, provided he possesses and does what these teach. Jesus never made so many *provisos*. They are not of his spirit. Both these are extreme and lazy views. Salvation in the minds of both classes is too arbitrary a thing. In my opinion Jesus meant far different by the terms "salvation," and "saved" from what many of these mean by them these days.

Salvation does not refer only to escape from hell fire in the next world. Jesus used it of a present condition. Neither does "to be saved" mean to enjoy God's special favor only here in this world. For Jesus said, "God so loved the world." What then should we say is the relation of the Brethren church to the other denominations of Christendom?

This: All Christians of whatever name will be saved in a relative sense who are absolutely honest with God and their own consciences and follow both as far as they know.

Paul seemingly rejoiced that he could say that he had lived with a conscience void of offense towards God and towards men. Acts 23:1; Acts 24:16. And despite all this cry against following conscience, you and I shall do well if we imitate Paul. It may make of us persecutors of God's people, but when once the light of truth comes, we too shall obtain mercy and have left intact that priceless thing, an inviolate conscience.

If that be so, says some one, we would better not disturb the peace of those who know not the truth. Yes, so says the opposer of foreign missions. But to Christians there is no alternative left. The imperative command, on which de-

pends the promise of Christ's presence with us is "Go ye."

Besides, is Christianity such that it brings no blessings which the heathen does not enjoy in his Christless heathenism, and does the full gospel not bring with its acceptance any blessed joy and any increase of satisfaction beyond what one knows who has followed only partially that divine man, who said, "he that shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven?" Every advance in that path "which shineth more and more unto the perfect day" brings added joy, and the light which illumines our hearts at each newly accepted truth brings with it its own reward.

No one honestly convinced of the truth of Trine Immersion and of the primitive Love Feast, and of the sweetly humble ordinance of Feet Washing can accept them in practice without experiencing a gladness of heart and peace of mind which is the sweetness of newly discovered truths accepted.

Once more, would any be so cruel as to deprive any soul of the joy of telling others a message which has brought to him the joy of service? Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And experience teaches us that it is true. The evidences of joy on the face of the new convert are worth seeing, but it was not Stephen the new convert, but Stephen delivering a message of love, whose face glowed with that transcendent glory that made it appear "as it had been the face of an angel."

Let us then be sober and earnest in the discussion of our relations to other bodies of Jesus' followers. Some in every church, the Brethren included, will certainly fail to reach heaven. Some in every church will obtain God's favor and enjoy his eternal presence, but it will be those only in any case who are honest with themselves and God. And many are the Cornelii in every church, let us hope, who, because they fear God and work righteousness are accepted with him. Acts 10:34, 35.

But who would deny that, tho Cornelius was a saved man in a relative sense, the message of Christ as the Savior, by Peter and the falling of the Holy Ghost upon all who heard, brought a joy and "salvation" even which otherwise Cornelius had not enjoyed.

And we in the Brethren church should not draw the cloak of Phariseeism too closely, for there are some blessed doctrines of God's word which have not yet been as generally accepted among us as we could wish, i. e., such a practical doctrine as Christian giving, divine healing, and missions.

But whether in our own dear church or in others that man cannot be saved who for the sake of selfish advantages,

such as lack of persecution for conscience sake, worldly gain, social position, and the respect of fellowmen, refuses to live up to all the truth God gives him. That is moral and spiritual dishonesty and leads to spiritual death. Those who follow Christ in all his teachings have a larger salvation, "more life" than those who follow only in part of them. This also is true of men both in the Brethren church and in all others.

Our advantages over those who do not practice the above named teachings, are the blessings which come from the acceptance of all the truth we know, the delight of a conscience at rest, and a spiritual growth commensurate with the truth we obey.

BIBLE PORTRAITS—Joshua

B. C. MOOMAW

The warrior hero of Israel doubtless borrows some of his greatness from the pre-eminence of his Master, whom he faithfully served in the wilderness journey. He stood, for these forty years in the shadow of Moses, yet so as not to be hidden by it, but to grow into ever expanding distinction, for that shadow was luminous, and those upon whom it rested shine out in the history of the world and in the history of the ages, distinguished and memorable.

His introduction to history is prophetic. He steps for the first time into view, not only a warrior armed, but a general commanding the host. He is yet in the vigor of youth. Mark well his mighty sinews. See that quick, elastic, aggressive carriage. Observe the terrors of that defiant brow, and the menacing glance of that fiery eye. Amalek, a nation of fierce, predatory warriors, comes out against this migratory horde of escaping slaves. Untrained to arms, trained only to obsequious servility, he does not expect them to withstand his terrible onset. He will consume them in a moment and gather the spoil. But with Joshua for general the slaves conquer. He was the Richard Lion Heart who restored the battle by the force of his irresistible genius, transforming in a single day a nation of slaves into a nation of conquerors.

The next appearance of Joshua upon this great stage of Israel's early history was when he went as one of the twelve spies to see the promised land and bring back a sample of its fruits, as well as a full report of its peoples and military defenses. On their return he stands by the side of Caleb and in opposition to the ten cowards who brought up an evil report of the land. It was in keeping with his character that he should be undismayed by the Anakim, the walled cities, the numerous populations of that exceedingly fertile country, and that he should also withstand the false spies and the fury of the mob which threaten-